

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Ynni, Cynllunio a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-816
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/01235/18

David John Rowlands AM
Chair - Petitions committee.
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July 2018

Dear David

Thank you for your letter of 21 June, regarding the petition P-05-816 Say 'NO' to pheasant shooting on Welsh public land.

In relation to the comments made by Animal Aid about the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Gamebirds Reared for Sporting Purposes, I have written to Animal Aid previously on this matter. Whilst there is no specific legislation regulating the breeding and rearing of gamebirds for sporting purposes, their welfare is protected by the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Section 9 of the Act, on the duty of a person responsible for animals to ensure welfare, sets out the needs of animals to include; a suitable environment; a suitable diet; ability to exhibit normal behaviour patterns; to be housed with, or apart from, other animals (as necessary), and; the need to be protected from pain, suffering injury and disease. The Code of Practice provides practical guidance in meeting the requirements of Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Work is ongoing to revise the existing Welsh Government Codes of Practice. Priorities for revising the Codes are agreed with stakeholders.

Any concerns about a specific gamebird rearing premises should be reported to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) or relevant Local Authority. They are responsible for the delivery and enforcement of animal health and welfare provisions on behalf of the Welsh Government. In the case of Bettws Hall, APHA has twice carried out investigations of the premises. APHA does not provide details of the investigations to the complainant.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

With regard to the comments made about the transparency of the process and potential conflict of interest with one of the academics engaged by NRW to oversee the review, this is an internal matter for NRW. However, I have had sight of correspondence from the Chief Executive of NRW to Animal Aid on this matter and following First Minister's Question on 12 June during which Bethan Sayed AM raised her concerns I arranged for NRW to write directly to the AM.

NRW has every confidence that the Review into the use of Firearms has been undertaken in a transparent and appropriate manner.

In May of 2016 the Board of NRW directed that a formal review should be undertaken into the use of firearms on land that NRW manage in response to the introduction of new legislation in Wales and following concerns from some stakeholders about the welfare of pheasants on land that NRW own and the ethics of allowing such activity on land owned by Welsh Ministers.

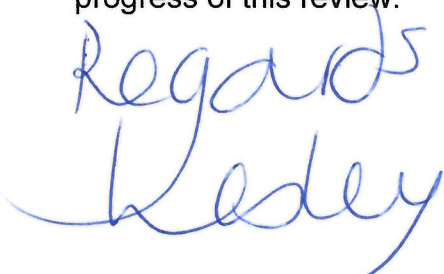
The Review has been undertaken in several stages including a public Call for Evidence, independent external assurance of the project approach and evidence analysis, and a formal Public Consultation on a series of proposals. The review has considered over 250 pieces of evidence and 4700 responses to the Public Consultation.

Several documents have already been published as part of the Review process including a Synthesis of Evidence to support the public consultation process. During the Review period meetings have been held with Countryside Alliance, British Association for Shooting and Conservation, Animal Aid, League Against Cruel Sports and an interested individual connected to the 'Stop shooting on Welsh Public Land' campaign. It is estimated that NRW staff effort over the Review period totals some 2000 hours.

The capacity in which two academics have been involved was to provide an independent external assurance on the process that NRW undertook for the Review. They also provided an assessment of any gaps that there may have been in the evidence that was considered. Therefore their input was solely in an advisory capacity; they did not undertake the review.

NRW have stated they are grateful for Animal Aid and the League Against Cruel Sports for providing information on the involvement the two academics have in the topic areas covered by the review. NRW remains satisfied that the context in which these academics were involved, coupled with their experience and professional status, means that they see no conflict of interest that would prejudice the outcome of the review.

The NRW Board will be considering the final recommendations of this evidence-based review at their forthcoming meeting on 12 July when they will make a decision on NRW's policy on this issue. Welsh Government Officials have been kept fully informed of the progress of this review.



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